

2003 Report of Accomplishments

Pomeroy Conservation District



Natural Resource Improvements in 2003 - Summary

BMP Implementation for Erosion Reduction and Water Quality Improvement

Three funding sources were used this year to implement BMP practices to reduce upland erosion and improve the water quality of the streams within the Pomeroy CD. The funds used were the Conservation Commission Implementation Grant, Interagency for Outdoor Recreation, and BPA. Under these funding sources the following practices were implemented. The following soil savings is calculated using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE), which is a formula for calculating soil erosion and runoff.

- No-till Seeding – 1,713 acres at a cost of \$25,697 saving 9,978 tons of soil
- Direct Seeding – 930.6 acres at a cost of \$9,306 saving 4,788 tons of soil
- Fencing – 1,500 ft. at a cost of \$605.96

We still have 5 participants in our 5-year no-till program. Several of them are entering their 5th year with mixed results. Two participants had problems with the invasion of Rattail Fescue and some weeds that seem to be building a resistance to herbicides and were not able to finish the entire program. This is a problem that several producers are running into and at this time the only real solution is a cultivation to control the fescue.

The cost sharing of upland conservation practices is reducing each year. This is because the board of supervisors placed a 3-year limitation on no-till and direct seed to better distribute the limited funding between operators. Many of the operators in our county have reached those limitations and are not eligible to receive further cost share for that practice. Even though our cost sharing of these practices has went down, a majority of these farmers have adapted these practices into their regular farming operations.



Mission of the Pomeroy Conservation District

To assist the farmers and ranchers of Garfield County with service, expertise, and funding to manage for the preservation and enhancement of natural resources within Pomeroy CD.

Water Quality Implementation – Livestock Influenced Water Quality

The district received a \$298,000 water quality grant from the Department of Ecology in the FY 2002 funding cycle. \$223,500 of this grant is used towards actual costs while the remaining \$74,500 is in-kind provided by the producer. This funding is being used to offset some of the costs associated with removing livestock winter-feeding and concentrated areas away from the stream. Currently there are 23 projects signed up under this program. Some of these projects were completed this spring but the majority will be completed this fall and winter. It has been determined that water quality is being adversely affected by this feeding operations located adjacent to streams and the livestock operators are being asked to move these operations away from the stream corridor. Those projects that are not CREP eligible or have large costs outside the CREP parameters, are seeking funding from the DOE grant to help with the costs of providing off site watering facilities, build fence, and plant trees.



Basic Funding

The basic funding received from the Legislature through the Conservation Commission pays for district operations not covered under grants obtained from BPA, DOE, SRFB, and others.

Local Funding – Agricultural Burning

The Pomeroy CD works in cooperation with the Garfield County Commissioners in operating the burn program within the county. The County carries liability insurance for this program while the district works with the producer in the permit process. The county and district each contribute \$.315 per acre into a special account to cover the deductible part of a possible future claim. During the fiscal year 03, the district issued permits for 9,153 acres under 52 field permits. We also sold 11 spot permits.

Water Quality Monitoring

The Pomeroy CD has been involved over the last 10 years in some kind of water quality monitoring. This year there was a lapse between funding contracts so the Department of Ecology provided personnel and funding to carry on the water quality monitoring in the Pataha, Deadman, and Alpowa Creek. The program of water quality monitoring is to provide information on the effectiveness of the upland and riparian practices being implemented by the farmers and ranchers within the Pomeroy CD. The Pomeroy CD had contracted with Washington State University to do water quality monitoring for the last three years, but this contract had expired and the new contract had not been completed. DOE stepped forward and provided the funding and personnel to continue with this testing from April thru December of 2002. A new grant for water quality testing was then provided from DOE Centennial Funds to again contract with WSU to continue on with the testing program. This DOE report is available from the district.

Professional Engineering

We used our professional engineer, Lance Horning, in the engineering of 19 separate livestock watering systems funded under the CREP and CCRP programs. He worked in cooperation with NRCS personnel. We also used our engineer to conduct three irrigation efficiency studies on Pataha Creek.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The Pomeroy CD is very successful in keeping the CREP program moving in Garfield County. This year, 66,226 ft. of stream bank (13 miles) was enrolled in the program involving 163 additional acres. Over 81,000 trees were planted in this riparian buffer zone. This year's enrollment brings the total of CREP in Garfield County to 852 acres with 69 miles of stream bank being protected.

Irrigation Efficiencies

Two efficiency studies were completed by Walla Walla Community College and three completed by our area district engineer. Two of the five studies showed qualification of the existing system under the old guidelines of the grant but may not qualify under the new. Irrigation in Garfield County is minimal and practically all of the irrigators in the county use hand-line with no open ditches. The efficiency of these systems can be improved but not to the degree to qualify for the program funding. Again, some producers have chosen to "wait and see".

Community Collaboration & Coordination

Over the years, a steady progression has occurred with the producers and citizens living inside the Pomeroy Conservation District. In the mid 80's when some funding became available from state and federal entities, the producers were reluctant to take part in any agreement, fearing a future conflict with a program that could change and not be of any benefit to them on their private property. Now that funding has been available for almost 15 years and the citizens and producers of Garfield County have seen what can be accomplished under these different programs, their feelings have changed. With this change in attitude, more conservation and restoration practices will be installed to protect and enhance our environment.

Information & Education

The conservation district is actively involved in providing information and education to the producers of Garfield County. Newspaper articles are written on all newsworthy information that comes through the district. The district also publishes a newsletter periodically to keep the farmers and ranchers informed of funding opportunities available through the district for practice implementation and other activities of the district. The rainfall information from the 18 stations in the county is also collected, placed in a database and published in the newsletter. The district held its annual meeting in February in cooperation with the Garfield and Asotin County Crop Improvement Association. Approximately 40 were in attendance. This year, Dr. Shulin Chen and Bill Bowe of WSU, provided information they have collected over the last three years from runoff plots in the county. This study is a comparison of conventional tillage and no-till seeded fields. The last two years of winter has provided a lower amount of information because of fewer runoff events. The district hosted the Commission monthly meeting and tour in May. The tour consisted of CREP projects implemented on Alpowa Creek, no-till seeding sites, and the demonstration windmill erected on Sweeney gulch to provide off site watering for cattle on the Pataha and Alpowa Creeks. BPA funded the project as a demonstration to provide information on the new technology available using old time proven methods of providing water.

Washington Conservation Districts

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